

Gen Wood opening remarks:

I'm joined today by Brigadier General Chuck Ickes, Deputy Director of the Air National Guard and Brigadier General Rick Ethredge, Deputy to the Chief of Air Force Reserve. Also here with me today to assist in your questions and answers is Brigadier General Allison Hickey – my Director for Air Force Future Total Force. We'd like to welcome all of you to this media roundtable regarding the state of Air Force Future Total Force activities. We're making some exciting changes to make this the most capable Air Force ever and we'd like to share our plans with you today as we take the next steps in identifying emerging, relevant missions for our Active Duty, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve in partnership together as a total force team.

Since our last media event in December '04 to announce six FTF "test case" initiatives, we've been working hard to make our FTF vision a reality. These initiatives have progressed well, with three Air National Guard personnel in F/A-22 training, on their way to the new associate unit at Langley AFB. Now living and working in Burlington, Vermont -- our community basing initiative -- are 2 of the 11 active duty members already assigned to the Air National Guard's Fighter Wing. The rest will arrive throughout the summer months. The Predator units slated for Arizona, Texas and New York have been put in the plan line-up and we have been working with the Air National Guard and Air Combat Command to identify the appropriate manning and training requirements. As of yesterday, Air Force Special Operations Command and the Air Force Reserve have decided to work together on an additional Predator Unit at Indian Springs in Nevada. Integration at the Air Warfare Center at Nellis AFB with both the Guard and Reserve grows daily – with hiring processes in full swing. Pacific Air Commands' 2 C-17 Associate Units in Hawaii and Alaska take steps daily to address concepts of operations – moving closer to the initial operating capability next year for one and a year later for the other. We have identified well over 100 relevant mission opportunities in both unit associations as well as emerging missions – to include units designed to augment our Air and Space Operations Centers and Warfighting Headquarters; Information Operations units; Intelligence Units; Space Missions; Medical missions; and numerous C4ISR mission areas and we have identified further training mission areas for our Guard and Reserve as lead in the C-5 and C-130 school houses in Texas and Arizona as well. Overall, we are very pleased with the progress of these FTF initiatives. With the DoD BRAC recommendations release to the Commission, we are now in a position to work with our stakeholders in the Active Duty, Guard and Reserve to lay plans for many more state by state mission assignments. We have a defined process and an aggressive schedule in place to make our Future Total Force plans a reality. If the Commission makes changes to the current DoD recommendations, we are prepared to make adjustments to our planning process and shift emerging mission areas to other locations.

The hard work that we are doing in coordination with the Guard and Reserve is best exemplified by our plans taking shape in North Dakota. As you may already know, the Air Force Program called for the retirement of the Air National Guard F-16s at Hector Field in Fargo. In addition, the DoD recommendation to the Commission is to move the KC-135 aircraft currently based at Grand Forks to other locations. Our plan is to take advantage of both of these recommended changes to create in North Dakota a "family of UAVs" using FTF organizations and capturing the highly trained and experienced capability of the North Dakota "Happy Hooligans." First, we will replace the F-16 mission with what we call an "active associate" Predator unit, which means the Guard will retain primary responsibility for the UAVs and an active duty unit will work with them to get the most out of this incredible ISR asset. Our current thought is to base the Predators and eventually Global Hawks themselves at Grand Forks. Using a well-tested concept of operations, the Air National Guard will operate the Ground Control Station from Hector Field,

while a Launch and Recovery Element at Grand Forks will provide the support to the actual platforms. This “split operations” is the current way we increase “reach-back” with the Predators at Nellis AFB. Reducing forward deployed footprints results in a reduction in the requirements for mobilization and deployment – a perfect fit for our citizen airmen. In addition to enhancing our efforts on the battlefield, these technologies may give us unsurpassed tools to support the states in their respective Title 32 missions. We are currently teaming with OSD on the issues associated with this possibility.

North Dakota has unique qualities, which make it a good location for UAV operations, that’s why we intend to grow the UAV missions in the state by placing our second major Global Hawk location at Grand Forks as well. The vast amounts of airspace combined with low population density and air traffic routes provide us with critical advance training opportunities to learn and practice all we can to operate UAVs worldwide and in all weather conditions like we encountered in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

Adequate Air and Range space is critical to the Future Total Force and the nation. That’s one reason why the DoD BRAC recommendation keeps Eielson AFB active. The home of the Alaska Air National Guard KC-135s, Eielson AFB has state of the art heated hangar space and close proximity to the largest airspace range – by nearly 3 times that of our Red Flag Airspace Ranges in Nevada. This Air and range space hosts large-scale multinational exercises with many coalition partners and is critically important to our Nation’s growing national strategies in the Pacific. You may recall we call these exercises “Cope Thunder.” Plus, we have the advantages of long summer days for flying; late fall and early spring periods for increased exercise opportunities; and proximity to Army forces, which enhances our joint training.

This, in a nutshell, is an update on our Future Total Force efforts. I’m happy to address your questions or provide you with more information. Let’s open this up for questions....